

# The Influence of the Global Health Campaigns on the Coverage of HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Polio in Nigerian Newspapers

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## **Abstract**

*This study examines the influence of the global health campaigns on the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigerian newspapers. Newspaper among other mass media, give coverage to health issues to create awareness and inform members of the public, which may facilitate good health outcomes. HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio are three major health problems that are ravaging the socio-economic life of members of Nigerian populace. It is, however, reported by newspaper health reporters in Nigeria that these health problems also dominate health pages in Nigerian newspapers compared to other health issues. The researcher, using survey method, found out from newspaper health reporters that the dominance of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio on the health pages of Nigerian newspapers is due to the global health campaigns. The health reporters argue that the burdens of these diseases resulted into the ongoing global health campaigns and have consequently widened their media coverage over the years. This, according to health reporters, is reflected in the domination of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio on the health pages of Nigerian newspapers. This study, however, concludes that, efforts should be intensified by the Nigerian government and other international health and funding agencies to increase the global health campaigns for the purpose of eradicating and reducing the global health problems.*

**Keywords:** HIV/AIDS, malaria, polio, health reporters, Nigerian newspapers, global health campaigns, health.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio are three major global health problems and global scourges (United Nations Children Education Fund, n.d.), which are among the deadliest diseases that are ravaging the socio-economic life of members of Nigerian populace. The deadly nature of these diseases has led to the on-going global health campaigns championed by many international health and funding organisations such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Bank. These global health campaigns have further led to the provision of several funding opportunities to many national governments across the world in order to reduce the menace of many health epidemics in many communities of the world, especially in the developing countries. Given this situation, this study set its central research question: Do global health campaigns influence the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigeria? This question gives the directional path to this study as it defines the entire thesis of the study.

In other words, the study examines how the on-going global health campaigns have influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigerian newspapers. One major importance of newspaper as a medium of mass communication in all societies is the dissemination of information on various issues that affect people in general. Considering the high premium generally placed on health in human society, newspapers disseminate information on health in order to inform, educate and perhaps influence health attitudes and change the health behaviours of members of the public. Health is said to be the state of mental and physical uprightness, and one of the basic components of any society (Agbonifo, 1983). Furthermore, it is averred that “a nation is healthy if the mental and physical needs of the generality of its citizens are adequately met. These needs include good nutrition, elimination

of poverty, hygienic environment, infrastructural facilities such as good water supply and housing, as well as efficient health services and medical personnel” (Agbonifo, 1983, p. 2003). Therefore, researchers in health communication field have over the years, identified newspapers as one major medium of communication health information to the public (Ahmed & Bates, 2013; Rimal & Lapinski, 2009). This is because newspapers involve in-depth analysis, especially through features and editorials, easy access and its durable nature. Scholars in health communication have, therefore, focused attention on the role of newspapers and their advocacy in promoting health information and findings of health research. Rimal and Lapinski (2009) note that one of the main goals of health communication is to disseminate information and educate people about health and disease-related issues. In this regard, newspapers play an important role in health communication because they provide people with access to a wide variety of health-related information. This health-related information includes information on disease symptoms, risk factors, available treatments and recommendations for health promoting behaviours (Rimal & Lapinski, 2009).

### **The prevalence of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigeria: A review**

Over the years, the state of the health system in Nigeria has been of concern because the country continues to battle with various epidemics as well as other preventable and curable diseases. Nigeria has recorded a huge loss of lives from these diseases and consequently; it has attracted attention by governments at all levels (within the country). The situation has also attracted attention from the global health agencies like the World Health Organisation (WHO), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations. The federal ministry in Nigeria also confirms the poor state of the health sector in the country. It states that the health profile of Nigeria in terms of burden of epidemics, like HIV/AIDS, malaria, polio and the general health system are all in a deplorable state. The primary,

secondary, and tertiary health care, health policies, structures, facilities, personnel, and the overall health administration are also poorly affected (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009).

This situation, according to the federal ministry of health in Nigeria, is compounded by increasing poverty in the country. “Poverty is keeping more and more people in poor health and so also is the poor health of increasing number of Nigerians retaining them in poverty” (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009, p. 1). Therefore, the nation is at a point where concerted efforts are needed by all stakeholders to improve the health status of Nigerians for sustainable development of the nation at large (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009b).

This study, therefore, reviews the health profile or health situation in Nigeria by specifically focusing on three major diseases- malaria, HIV/AIDS and polio. These three diseases are known as the three global scourges (United Nations International Children’s Education Fund, n.d.). Malaria is found throughout the tropical and subtropical regions of the world and causes more than 300 to 500 million acute illnesses and at least one million deaths annually (Carter & Mendis, 2002; Gramiccia & Beales, 1998; Najera, 1999). It is estimated that 40 percent of the world’s population, the larger proportion of whom are living in the poorest nations of the world, is at risk of malaria (Najera, 2001). Malaria affects five times as many people as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), leprosy, measles and tuberculosis combined (Nabarro & Mendis, 2000). The global trend in health research reveals that malaria is the most prevalent parasitic endemic disease in Africa despite the fact that it is preventable, treatable and curable (Nabarro & Mendis, 2000; Sachs & Malaney), and it remains one of the major health problems in Nigeria (Federal Ministry of Health, 2003). Malaria in Nigeria is yet to improve despite several programmes of actions that have been designed by the government over the years (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012).

It is, however, instructive to note that one of the factors that makes

malaria so prevalent in Nigeria is the climatic condition. The climatic condition makes it easy for malaria transmission throughout the country as Nigeria is primarily situated between 40° and 130° northern latitude (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009). Also, *Plasmodium falciparum*, the dominant species of malaria parasites, are responsible for the most severe forms of the disease, and *Anopheles gambiae* (complex A. gambiaes.s.), the dominant malaria carrier, are both found throughout the northern region (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012). Statistics from the federal government indicate that the country records 70-110 million malaria clinical cases per year and malaria related annual deaths for children under five years of age are estimated at around 300,000 (285,000-331,000). Furthermore, 11 percent of maternal mortality is due to malaria. This has an enormous economic impact of about N132 billion (\$704m) lost to malaria annually in the form of treatment costs, prevention and loss of man hours (Federal Ministry of Health, 2009b). The country bears 25 percent of malaria disease burden in Africa. The children and women are the most affected. Malaria accounts for 30 percent of under age-five mortality and contributes to about 60 percent of outpatient visits and 30 percent of admissions annually (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012).

It has also been found that the malaria preventive culture among mothers of under age-five is generally poor across the six geo-political zones in Nigeria (Sachs & Malaney, 2004). The preventive health behaviour against malaria, especially the use of bed net among under-fives, was found to be generally low across the six geo-political zones. Only 10 percent of the respondents in a national study claimed to use bed nets (Federal Ministry of Health, 2003).

Similarly, HIV/AIDS, which is regarded as a global threat, also poses challenges to human development in Africa. In many countries, the epidemic is said to have cut life expectancy and robbed society of millions of people in their prime working years. It has also dimmed the hope of living full and productive lives for unimaginable numbers of infants, children, young and adults (World Bank, 2011). In the global arena, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS has constituted a major health and socio economic challenge for the past

three decades. HIV/AIDS has reversed many of the health and developmental gains in the underdeveloped and the developing countries (Federal Ministry of Health, 2012). It is also reported that none of the problems plaguing society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century- wars, famine or crime, is as threatening to mankind as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Since its discovery in 1981 by Robert Gallo of USA and Lue Montgnier of France, (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010), the virus has killed more than 33.3 million people in the world out of which Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 22.5 million (68 percent of the global total). In Nigeria, it is estimated that HIV/AIDS has affected 2.98 million people, thereby making Nigerians the second highest number of people living with HIV/AIDS in the world after South Africa (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010). Furthermore, between 2000 and 2011, the World Bank alone has provided more than \$1.5 billion to over 30 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria to combat the epidemic of HIV/AIDS (World Bank, 2011).

The scourge of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria has affected the social and economic fabrics of the nation thereby impeding the overall progress of the country. Since the first case of HIV/AIDS reported in 1986, the pandemic has continued to evolve with multiplier effects (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010). Retrospectively, in 1991, the HIV prevalence rate in Nigeria was 1.8 percent, 5.8 percent in 2001, 4.4 percent in 2005, 4.6 percent in 2008 and 4.1 percent in 2010. Among the high risk groups, female sex workers constitute an important reservoir of HIV infection for continuous transmission to the general population (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010).

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Nigeria has facilitated the re-emergence of disease conditions such as pulmonary tuberculosis and other opportunistic infections (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010). Furthermore, it is found that HIV/AIDS cases are very visible in Nigeria because about one out of every four persons in the country had seen someone with HIV/AIDS or known someone who died of AIDS (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010). Benue State, a state from the north central geo-political zone of the country

has the highest prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS. Among the six geo-political zones in the country, north central has the highest prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS, while the most affected age group is 30-34 (Federal Ministry of Health, 2010).

The case of polio and its epidemic nature in the global arena has been an age-long phenomenon across the world. The pandemic once ravaged the developed countries of the world. For instance, the United Kingdom in 1789 and United States of America in 1843 recorded their first polio cases respectively (Centres for Diseases Control and Prevention, 2009). According to the World Health Organisation (2013c), polio is a highly infectious disease caused by a virus, which invades the nervous system, and can cause total paralysis in a matter of hours. Poliomyelitis, or polio as commonly called, is a disease caused by an enterovirus found throughout the world (Renne, 2010), and one in 200 infections leads to irreversible paralysis (usually in the legs). While five to ten percent of those paralysed die when their breathing muscles become immobilised, it is confirmed that unlike the scourge of malaria and HIV/AIDS, polio has largely been eradicated in many countries of the world (World Health Organisation, 2013c).

In Nigeria, polio seems perpetual as over the years, the pandemic continues to exist. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2013) found that out of the three countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria) of concern, where polio eradication is yet to be achieved, Pakistan has reduced the number of polio cases from 198 in 2011 to 56 in 2012. Afghanistan saw a decrease from 80 to 35 during the same period, but cases in Nigeria increased from 62 in 2011 to 119 in 2012. The long history of Nigeria's struggle with polio is evidenced in traditional linguistic descriptions of polio throughout the country over time (Renne, 2010). For instance, it is called *arunaromolaparomolese* (literally, a disease that cripples a child's hands and legs) among the Yorubas, in the southwest, *oria ngwulo* (a disease that causes paralysis of limbs, lameness) among the Igbos in the southeast, and *cutar Shan Inna* (literally, a disease caused by the drinking of Inna) among the Hausas in the north

(Renne, 2010). Because of the prevalence of polio in Nigeria, studies since the 1950s and in the early 1960s started to focus attention on this endemic, particularly when some six European expatriates contracted polio in Lagos, south west Nigeria, which led to the death of two of them (Collis, Ransome-Kuti, Taylor, & Baker, 1961; Paul, 1971).

## **METHODOLOGY**

The researcher adopted a survey method and data was collected through an in-depth interview research tool in order to achieve the goal of the study. The in-depth interview is a qualitative research technique that involves conducting intensive individual interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, issue, program, or situation (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The in-depth interview tool has been found to be useful in qualitative data collection for certain reasons including, but not limited to, needs assessment, program refinement, issue identification, strategic planning and problem probing (Rubin & Rubin, 2004). The in-depth interview is also appropriate to explore how global health campaigns have influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigerian newspapers. The use of in-depth research technique enabled the researcher to ask open-ended questions that elicited further depth of information from the selected journalists (I.S. Rubin & Rubin, 2004). This approach allowed the selected newspaper health reporters to comprehensively dwell on various questions that the researcher carefully and systematically asked from them.

### **Population, sample and sampling technique**

Sample selection of in-depth interview research is one of the grey areas that no universal technique has been postulated, widely accepted and adopted by scholars. It has therefore continued to generate debates over the years in many academic conferences and journals, which have produced written reports and myriad publications (Baker & Edwards, 2012). However, scholars have generally agreed that sample size in an in-depth interview research is often smaller than what is obtainable in quantitative research methods



(Dworkin, 2012; Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). This is because in-depth interviews are often concerned with garnering an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon, thereby focusing on meaning (and heterogeneities in meaning) (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Dworkin, 2012), which is often centred on the how and why of a particular phenomenon, issue, process, situation, subculture, scene or set of social interactions (Dworkin, 2012).

Furthermore, scholars have espoused the concept of saturation as a guiding principle in sample selection in an in-depth interview research. Most scholars posit that the concept of saturation is the most important factor to think about when mulling over sample size decisions in an in-depth interview (Mark, 2010). Saturation is defined by many as the point at which the data collection process no longer offers any new or relevant data (Dworkin, 2012). Saturation is attained “when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories.” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113) The nature of problem being studied, the social setting, the size of population, the research timeframe and the available resources are considerable factors in sample selection in an in-depth interview research (Morse, 2000; Ritchie et al., 2003). A number of articles, book chapters, and books recommend guidance and suggest between five and 50 interviewees as adequate sample (Creswell, 1998; Morse, 1994, 2000). Also, it is contended that five to 25 interviewees are adequate as sample size in an in-depth interview method (Morse, 1994). Other studies posit that at least between six and 15 interviewees should be the smallest acceptable sample size (Bertaux, 1981; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

Therefore, the study employed purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select thirteen (13) newspaper health reporters as respondents for this study. A purposive sampling technique is a form of non-probability sampling frequently used in a social science research, where the decisions concerning the individuals to be included in the sample are made by the researcher based on a number of criteria. These criteria may include specialist knowledge of the research issue, and the nature of the study (Oliver, 2006).

The researcher argues further that the nature of study may necessitate researchers making a decision about the individual participants who will be mostly relevant to contribute appropriate data, both in terms of relevance and depth to the study (Oliver, 2006). Therefore, the researcher selected 13 health reporters as respondents within the 20 existing national newspapers in Nigeria. The researcher selected only one health reporter from each newspaper organisation. The researcher purposely designed a set of criteria that guided him in selecting the 13 newspaper health reporters interviewed for the study. These criteria include:

- i. **Health reporting as the current beat:** Individual journalists selected were (as at the time of interview) reporting for health beat or writing for health columns of their newspaper organisations with particular emphasis on the newspapers selected for the content analysis of this study. This criterion was set in order to tap into the current trends in health reporting among health reporters in Nigeria.
- ii. **Full time employment:** All the health reporters interviewed were officially employed by one of the national newspaper organisations in Nigeria as a full time staff. A full time staff of any national newspaper is more accountable to the organisation vis-à-vis his professional duties. This, therefore, increases his level of commitment to his duty, thereby increasing his experience on the job. The rationale here is that, the more a journalist is committed to his duty given his status as a full time staff, the more experiences he garners from the field. The researcher in this study considered this criterion essential in the selection of the health reporters that were interviewed.
- iii. **Five years of experience in health reporting:** All the health reporters included in the interviews have had in the minimum, five years of work experience in health reporting for newspaper (s) in Nigerian environment. The rationale behind this criterion is that five years of experience of health reporting should be sufficient enough

to have made a health reporter a stakeholder, who will be able to discuss the intricacies and the dynamics involved in health reporting. This actually reflected in the course of interviewing all the selected health reporters.

- iv. Journalism training or training in health reporting:** All the health reporters included in the interviews were professionally trained and certified in journalism, mass communication or through short courses in journalism or health reporting. Such a qualification or certificate includes a Bachelor of Arts or Science (B.A/B.Sc), Higher National Diploma (HND), National Diploma (ND), Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, Advanced Diploma and ordinary certificate.

Having identified the selected health reporters by name through newspaper bylines, there was a need for the researcher to identify and meet them in person to conduct the interviews. To achieve this, the researcher adopted snowball research technique. Snowball research technique is “a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher begins by identifying an individual perceived to be an appropriate respondent. This respondent is then asked to identify another potential respondent. The process is repeated until the researcher has collected sufficient sample. Snowball is also called ‘chain letter’ sampling.” (Oliver, 2006, p.1) As a qualitative research technique that is more popular in sociological studies, snowball sampling technique is valuable given its potential to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents, which is capable of generating an escalating set of potential contacts for a researcher (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). Therefore, Atkinson and Flint (2004) define snowball sampling as “a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors. These actors may themselves open possibilities for an expanding web of contact and inquiry.” (Atkinson & Flint, 2004, p.1044)

Consequently, the researcher got the phone contact of the health reporter of *The Union Newspaper* through a friend journalist. After the

interview with *The Union Newspaper* health reporter, the researcher asked for the phone contacts of other health reporters. This process was repeated with other health reporters until the last health reporter was interviewed. Using structured-questions format, all the interviews were conducted in the offices of the selected health reporters, each of which lasted for an average of 50 minutes to 1 hour. All the interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. The researcher singlehandedly transcribed the interviews into texts, which were sent to all the interviewees via their email addresses. By so doing, the health reporters were able to check the texts against any factual errors and confirmed the accuracy of the transcription before the researcher went ahead to analyse the interview data. The table below shows the professional status of health reporters selected for the study.

**Table 1:**  
**Selected Health Reporters, Newspapers and Professional Status**

| SN | Newspaper                    | Background | Years of experience in journalism | Years of experience in health reporting |
|----|------------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1  | <i>The Daily Independent</i> | Arts       | 25                                | 25                                      |
| 2  | <i>The Vanguard</i>          | Science    | 20                                | 20                                      |
| 3  | <i>Nigerian Tribune</i>      | Science    | 17                                | 17                                      |
| 4  | <i>The Guardian</i>          | Science    | 16                                | 16                                      |
| 5  | <i>New Telegraph</i>         | Arts       | 15                                | 10                                      |
| 6  | <i>National Mirror</i>       | Arts       | 15                                | 5                                       |
| 7  | <i>Daily Trust</i>           | Arts       | 12                                | 5                                       |
| 8  | <i>The Sun</i>               | Science    | 11                                | 11                                      |
| 9  | <i>The Hallmark</i>          | Arts       | 10                                | 5                                       |
| 10 | <i>The Nation</i>            | Arts       | 8                                 | 5                                       |
| 11 | <i>The Union</i>             | Arts       | 8                                 | 5                                       |
| 12 | <i>Business Day</i>          | Science    | 5                                 | 5                                       |
| 13 | <i>The Punch</i>             | Science    | 5                                 | 5                                       |

## **FINDINGS**

Newspaper health reporters in Nigeria, identified and confirmed that global health campaigns is a major reason for their attention on HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in the coverage of health issues. All the health reporters interviewed in this study believe that HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio are well reported by Nigerian newspapers in general. For instance, The *Business Day* (personal communication, August 28, 2014) states that, “the burdens of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in terms of mortality and morbidity have increased global health campaigns in the recent past. These campaigns, which often attract media attention in Nigeria as elsewhere, are being championed by various international health and funding agencies.” The prominent among them, according to this health reporter and other health reporters interviewed are, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the World Bank and the United Nations Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF). Consequently, the *Daily Independent* health reporter (personal communication, September 15, 2014) states that “there have been several grants and funds provided by these international funding agencies to national governments and non-governmental organisations to create awareness about HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in order to reduce their burdens in Nigeria.”

As stated by the *Business Day* health reporter (personal communication, August 28, 2014), “in the case of HIV/AIDS, there have been a lot of grants provided globally for several national governments and non-governmental organisations in order to fight the virus. So, this makes HIV/AIDS to be well reported by the media, including Nigerian newspapers.” Furthermore, “the global health campaigns on HIV/AIDS became necessary because of the global concern of the stigmatisation and discrimination of those who are living with HIV” (*Business Day* health reporter, Interview, August 28, 2014). Also, the *Daily Independent* health reporter (Interview, September 15, 2014) states that “the dangers and burdens of HIV/AIDS make global health campaigns necessary, which have largely influenced the

level of attention it has consistently received in Nigerian newspapers. This is because Nigeria is not isolated; it is part of the world, and it is influenced by the global trends on health issues.”

The *Daily Independent* health reporter ( Interview, September 15, 2014) describes malaria as “the number one killer disease in Nigeria because most people are affected severally within a close interval.” According to this health reporter, “most people in Nigeria are said to belong to the ‘AA blood genotype,’ which implies that many people in Nigeria suffer from malaria regularly. This, therefore, makes it a national issue that calls for the attention of the media.” (*Daily Independent* health reporter, Interview, September 15, 2014) The health reporter from the *Business Day* puts the issue of malaria disease in a perspective. This health reporter states that “malaria continues to attract national attention because low labour productivity in Nigeria has been tied to malaria. This, therefore, has made malaria to enjoy media attention in Nigeria.” (*Business Day* health reporter, Interview, August 28, 2014)

The deadly nature of HIV and malaria, which according to the health reporter from *The Guardian* “can wipe out entire communities, is responsible for the global attention these diseases have received over the years from the media in general.” (*The Guardian* health reporter, Interview, August 23, 2014) That same health reporter notes further that “many non-governmental organisations receive funding from international health and funding agencies to create awareness about these health issues and they have to communicate what they are doing. The more they communicate, the more they attract media attention and enjoy media coverage.” (*The Guardian* health reporter, Interview, August 23, 2014) Furthermore, the health reporter from *The Union* (Interview, August 3, 2014) emphasises that “as far as Nigeria is concerned, we have two critical health issues that dominate Nigerian newspapers. They are HIV/AIDS and malaria.”

The global health campaigns on polio championed by the World Health

Organisation, the World Bank, and The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have consistently focused attention on Nigeria in order to completely eradicate the disease in the country and the two other countries currently affected (Afghanistan and Pakistan). The *Business Day* health reporter argues that this disease has attracted more attention in Nigeria because of the religious and cultural beliefs that are attached to it in the northern part of the country. That same health reporter states that “most advocacies have focused on re-orientating people towards changing their beliefs so as to make Nigeria a polio-free country.” (*Business Day* health reporter, Interview, August 28, 2014) This resonates with the opinion of *The Union* health reporter (Interview, August 3, 2014) who states that “in relation to polio disease in Nigeria, this is very endemic in the northern part of the country because most of them claim that their religious beliefs do not allow the administration of polio vaccine on their children. There is a religious undertone to the issue of polio in the north, and that is why they prevent their children from taking the polio vaccine.” The health reporter argues that “Nigeria would have eradicated polio over the years if religious coloration was not added to it in the north. After all, in spite of our poor health system, Nigeria was able to eradicate guinea worm because it was accepted and supported by all segments of Nigerian society.” (*The Union* health reporter, Interview, August 3, 2014)

Furthermore, the *Daily Trust* health reporter and *The Sun* health reporter confirm that Nigerian newspapers have consistently been influenced by the global health campaigns in the coverage of health issues by giving more attention to HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio. This, according to these health reporters, is due to the fact that the United Nations has annual designated dates for each of the global killer diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, cancer, hypertension, and tuberculosis. Therefore, “when those designated health days are coming closer, we are able to get information, updates, breakthroughs and other new things in relation to the health issue in

question. This consequently influences newspaper coverage of such health issues at that time.” (*Daily Trust* health reporter, Interview, September 15, 2014) It is further noted that “when a disease is of global concern like HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio, every country has a responsibility to take it seriously and the media in general have a significant role to play.” (*Daily Independent* health reporter, Interview, September 15, 2014, 2104, 2014)

The health reporter from *The Sun* notes that media attention to diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio on their designated United Nations days is a practical way of participating in the ongoing global health campaigns on these diseases because it is part of the social responsibility of the media in general. According to *The Sun* health reporter (Interview, August 28, 2014), “on such days, if a newspaper does not publish stories on the disease concerned, then the sense of social responsibility of the health reporter and the entire editorial crew of the newspaper is questionable. That is why you have a lot of stories on malaria, HIV/AIDS and other killer disease from time to time.” That same health reporter confirms that, “the global campaigns and public awareness on the burdens of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio continue to influence their coverage in Nigerian newspapers because there are some non-governmental organisations that specifically focus attention on these diseases. This consequently increases the media coverage of these health issues beyond the United Nations designated days.” (*The Sun* health reporter, Interview, August 28, 2014) *The Sun* health reporter (Interview, August 28, 2014) further stresses that, “these agencies and non-governmental organisations create awareness at all times by organising events and journalists across the media are invited to cover the events. This increases newspaper coverage of such health issues.” Other platforms identified by the health reporters that facilitate the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio is the existence of some health professional associations and media groups, which focus attention on some of these health problems, thereby creating awareness about their burdens through the media.



## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

As found in this study, the global health campaigns through which awareness is created on various diseases and health issues in order to reduce their burden and gradually achieve total eradication in some cases, has a major influence in the newspaper coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigeria. According to the health reporters interviewed in this study, the establishment of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and other international health agencies such as the United States Agencies for International Development (USAID) and the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), has made the global health campaigns on HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio massive and has consequently influenced the coverage of these diseases in Nigeria. It may be argued that the global health campaigns, which have consistently been championed by several international health and funding agencies over the last few decades, is a testimony to the primacy of health in society. Such global efforts toward the eradication of health epidemics across the world have resulted into some positive outcomes. An example of these outcomes is the influence of global health campaigns on the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigeria. Another example is the professional empowerment that many health reporters across the world have received through health reporting trainings and seminars often sponsored by these international health agencies. It may be contended further that the ongoing global health campaigns on many global health problems, is a re-echo of the classic of the great thinker and philosopher, Aristotle, who espouses that society's obligation to maintain and improve health is grounded in the ethical principle of human flourishing. This principle holds that society is obligated to enable human beings to live flourishing, and thus healthy lives (cited in Ruger et al., 2001).

Similarly, it is critical to state that the ongoing health campaigns against global epidemics have the potential to contribute to societal development in general. This is because if diseases are reduced or eradicated, this will improve

individuals' wellbeing in society and can facilitate development. It has been argued that "a nation is healthy if the mental and physical needs of the generality of its citizens are adequately met. These needs include good nutrition, elimination of poverty, hygienic environment, infrastructural facilities such as good water supply and housing, as well as efficient health services and medical personnel." (Agbonifo, 1983, p. 2003) This also resonates with the contention of scholars who emphasise the health status of individual members of society as an integral part of development (Habte, 1983; Hamelink, 1983; Mabogunje, 1980; Sant'Ana, 2008). These scholars contend that development should not only be addressed from an economic point of view of gross domestic product (GDP), gross national product (GNP) and income per capita (Habte, 1983; Hamelink, 1983; Mabogunje, 1980; Sant'Ana, 2008). Rather, the health system and general health status of the citizenry are all key indices in measuring development in human society (Habte, 1983; Hamelink, 1983; Sant'Ana, 2008).

Many of the international health and funding agencies have been involved in massive campaigns to address many global health scourges such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, polio and other global health problems. These campaigns have led to various action programmes such as the Global Malaria Action Plan (GMAP), Roll Back Malaria Partnership (RBM), European Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2012–2015 (World Health Organisation, 2011); Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan 2013–2020 (CMHAP) (World Health Organisation, 2013a), Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011–2020 (GVAN), (World Health Organisation, 2013b) and Global Health Programme (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, n.d.). The Bill and Melinda Global Health Programme covers such health issues as enteric and diarrheal diseases, family planning, HIV/AIDS, malaria, maternal, neonatal, and child health, neglected and other infectious diseases, nutrition, pneumonia, polio, tobacco, tuberculosis and global health discovery.

Another piece of remarkable evidence for global health campaigns was the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year

2000 as a blueprint for building a worthwhile human society in the 21st century. This further underscores the primacy of health in human society. Three of the eight goals focus attention on health related issues, namely goal 4: reduce child mortality, goal 5: improve maternal health, goal 6: combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, clearly demonstrates the paramount importance of health in society. This study has shown that all these efforts, which are geared towards reducing many health problems, eradicating many other disease conditions and ultimately to improve the health status of individual members of society and the health systems in general, may have influenced the coverage of HIV/AIDS, malaria and polio in Nigerian national newspapers.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is no gainsaying the fact that the eradication of many global health epidemics will require multifarious approach. These include the efforts of national governments, the expertise and commitment of healthcare providers and professionals, the engagements of health communication practitioners and other important stakeholders in society. However, one major constant approach that consistently proves indispensable is global health campaigns on public health issues. The global health campaigns have consequently widened the exploration of the media in creating awareness about the global epidemics. As indicated in this study, the global health campaigns have influenced the level of attention that the media have given to the coverage of many health issues around the world. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that more efforts should be made by national governments, the World Health Organisation and other international health and funding agencies; to increase the global health campaigns in order to facilitate the eradication of many global health epidemics as this will increase the level of media coverage on the global epidemics.

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